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DE RUEHNO #0537/01 2751219

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FM USMISSION USNATO

TO RUEHHSQ/AMEMBASSY SKOPJE IMMEDIATE 3304

RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1239

RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO IMMEDIATE

INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNOSC/ORG FOR SECURITY CO OP IN EUR COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHNO/USDELMC BRUSSELS BE PRIORITY

RHMFISS/USNMR SHAPE BE PRIORITY

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 USNATO 000537

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/01/2017

TAGS: NATO PGOV PREL MK

SUBJECT: MACEDONIA'S ANNUAL NATIONAL PROGRAM ENGENDERS CONCERN IN SPC/R SEPTEMBER 20

REF: A. STATE 092807

1B. USNATO 0500

1C. MACEDONIA'S ANP (E-MAILED TO EUR/RPM)

Classified By: DCM Richard G. Olson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: NATO's Senior Political Committee (Reinforced) (SPC/R) met with a Macedonian delegation on September 20 to discuss their latest Annual National Program (ANP) for this year's abbreviated Membership Action Plan cycle before the April 2008 summit in Bucharest. Many Allies commended Macedonia for progress made during the last cycle and for continued involvement in international operations. However, most also observed numerous and substantial areas of reform that still needed to be completed within a very short time frame. Areas of Allied concern include, but were not limited to: judicial reform, police reform, full implementation of both the May 29, 2007 Agreement with the DUI and the Ohrid Framework Agreement, as well as continued action against corruption. Macedonian representatives indicated that they understood the Allies' calls to advance and continue reform with even greater intensity over the next six months. Finally, Greece raised the issue of conflict over Macedonia's name. END SUMMARY.

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MACEDONIA: REFORMING WITH AN EYE TOWARDS BUCHAREST  
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12. (C) The Macedonian delegation, led by Ambassador Nikola Dimitrov (National Coordinator for NATO integration) outlined the progress made over the last cycle. He emphasized Macedonia's strong economic figures, noting that GDP growth is expected to reach 6.3 percent over the next three years and inflation to remain low (hovering between 2.5 percent and 3 percent) over the same period. Dimitrov also stressed steady progress on codifying and applying the rule of law and the continued fight against corruption and organized crime, stressing that Macedonia has, over the past year, enacted or become party to about a dozen domestic and international agreements to stem the tide of corruption and organized crime. Finally, Dimitrov asserted that the Ohrid Agreement has begun to be successfully implemented and Macedonia is moving forward under its terms. He described Macedonia's major remaining challenges as completing electoral reform, the judicial council, and, most pressing, improving the government's contentious relationship with the opposition DUI party.

¶3. (C) Liljana Steriovska, Secretary of State with the Ministry of Defense, described the successes of Macedonia's defense reforms thus far. She reminded the SPC/R of Macedonia's active participation in four international missions with Macedonia deploying a total of 202 people. Current missions include NATO ISAF in Afghanistan as well as engagement in non-NATO missions in Iraq, Lebanon, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Additionally, she pointed out that during this MAP cycle, Macedonia had successfully assumed responsibility for logistical support of the KFOR Mission in Kosovo. Defense reforms continue and include: the planned transformation of the Macedonian Army (ARM) by the end of 2007, implementation of plans for appropriate and equitable ethnic representation in the ARM and its reserves, an increase in combat readiness via modernization and procurement of new equipment, and a defense funding allocation of 2.3 percent of GDP.

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ALLIES VOICE CONCERN  
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¶4. (C) POLAD reaffirmed U.S. support for the largest possible performance-based enlargement at Bucharest. He acknowledged the broad range of Macedonia's accomplishments during the current MAP. Stressing the need to meet strict performance-based standards however, he pointed to the primary U.S. concern that the Ohrid Agreement and the subsequent May 29 agreement with DUI have not been fully implemented. (NOTE: On May 29, the U.S. and EU brokered a five-point agreement between the governing VMRO and the ethnic Albanian opposition DUI that addressed their key policy concerns and paved the way for the end of DUI's parliamentary boycott. END NOTE.) POLAD (and other Allies),

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however, pointed out that execution of the Agreement has been slow and POLAD emphasized the need for its immediate and full implementation. POLAD also discussed the political distraction caused by current efforts to amend the electoral code, and the necessity to re-double efforts to reform the judicial process before April.

¶5. (C) Virtually all of the Allies who intervened took similar positions - that although progress had been made, substantial challenges remain regarding judicial reform (including police reforms), completing the Judicial Council, and continuing the campaign against corruption.

¶6. (C) Allies commended Macedonia for its involvement in international operations, and lauded the logistical support provided to NATO for operations in Kosovo. However, Allies voiced concern over the lack of detail with regard to defense issues including information on defense structure timelines, the Reserve Force concept, and budget matters (FR, US, UK, NL, NO).

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WHAT'S IN A NAME?  
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¶7. (C) The Greek political officer condemned Macedonia for not having abided by the Interim Accord of 1995 and charged Macedonia with having breached "contractual obligations" to negotiate sincerely over its name. The Greek representative declared, "We are forced to come to the conclusion that the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's commitment to these talks under the auspices of the UN is merely a lip-service.... To us, the name issue seems to be the main vehicle of a hostile, irredentist propaganda, which blatantly violates the Interim Accord of 1995.8 While no Ally endorsed Greece's position, France had earlier pointed to the need to resolve the name issue, inadvertently reinforcing Greece's uncompromising message.

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